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ABSTRACT

Presents three empirical studies as the major foundation to form the self awareness training program in counselor education. These empirical studies were done sequentially to: (1) define what self-awareness is; (2) explore how the self-awareness training strategy can be conducted along with existing courses; and (3) evaluate the effects of the self-awareness training course from the viewpoint of counseling students. The self-awareness-training program, a two- or three-credit course, has four stages: a beginning, a learning-by-doing stage, a terminating stage, and an evaluation stage. To enhance thinking and enrich experiences through varied homework assignments, it is best to include both cognitive and experiencing aspects. The program encourages students to share, discuss, and participate in exercises for better comprehension. In order to consolidate learning effects, a learning journal and term paper are used at the end of the program. Basic concepts and knowledge are grounded at the beginning. The most significant point is counselor educators should be more aware of the meaning and worthiness of self-awareness and willing to conduct training. Based on studies contents of "helping relationships", being aware of counselor and client traits, including characteristics and behavior, are also necessary and important, besides counseling theories and skills. (Contains one figure describing the stages and strategies of the self awareness training program.) (JDM)

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THE SELF-AWARENESS-TRAINING PROGRAM IN COUNSELOR-EDUCATION

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Introduction

Concerning the quality of counseling profession and education, CACREP (1994) required eight common-core areas: human growth and development, social and cultural foundations, helping relationships, group work, career and lifestyle development, appraisal, research and program evaluation, and professional orientation. Based on studies contents of "helping relationships," being aware of counselor and client traits, including characteristics and behavior, are also necessary and important, besides counseling theories and skills. In other words, counselor's ability of self-knowledge and/or self-awareness also plays a critical role in the helping relationships and counseling process (Chen, 1998a). Therefore, how to enable counselor's self-awareness becomes an important issue on counselor-education. In this paper, three empirical studies were presented as the major foundation to form the self-awareness-training program in counselor-education. These empirical studies were done sequentially to (1) define what self-awareness is, (2) explore how self-awareness-training strategy be conducted along with existing courses, and (3) evaluate the effects of self-awareness-training course from the viewpoint of counselor-students. Following by introducing previous studies briefly, the self-awareness-training program were offered to counselor-educators.

Summary of Empirical Studies

Study 1

Thirty-one practicing counselors (24 females and 7 males) were interviewed once individually to narrate his/her idea about self-awareness and personal experience related to self-awareness. Accordingly, self-awareness was defined as: *one is able to know, understand, self-examine, and think about one's own feeling, action, thought, I-thou relationship and personal characteristics in terms of the state, change, influence and cause*. In other words, self-awareness refers to a continuing process of "one observes oneself" and happens on both here-and-now and there-and-then. Concerning the principle of self-awareness-training, to enhance both experience and thinking is primary (Chen, 1996a).

Study 2

Study 2 involved 9 counselor-educators (7 females and 2 males). They were also interviewed once individually to share how they conduct self-awareness-training and evaluate training effects in

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counseling courses. In sum, two primary principles of conducting self-awareness-training are (1) setting human on the core and reflecting back to self and (2) emphasizing experiencing and stimulating thinking. Rooted on primary principles, counselor-educators tended to enhance students' self-awareness through (1) knowledge teaching, (2) thinking activities and homework, (3) experiencing activities and homework, and (4) role-playing and practical exercises. Concerning evaluating training effects, student's feedback and/or paper and teachers' observation were found as informal process instead of formal way (Chen, 1998b).

Study 3

Thirteen volunteer sophomores (11 females and 2 males) from those who took the self-awareness course (a 2-semester-credits course) were interviewed to explore the learning process and follow-up effects. Three times of interview were conducted at the beginning of course (individually), the end of course (in-groups), and 3 months later (in-groups). As a result, counselor-students were impressed by the proper sequence of course structure, discussing and sharing experiences, the working-sheets that induced thinking and self-examination, and the safe and free atmosphere. In terms of learning effects, instructor, working-sheets, home-works, and discussion topics were found as major contributors. Accordingly, the main learning effects were to enable counselor-students' self-understanding, self-concept, self-confidence and self-respect, and to improve their interpersonal interaction, communication, and relationship (Chen & Wang, 1998).

Self-awareness Training Program

According to previous empirical studies and related works (Chen, 1996b, 1996c, 1997a, 1997b), the author tended to develop a self-awareness-training program, a 2 or 3 semester-credits course containing about 16 to 18 sections, in terms of the contents, process/strategies and evaluation method (see Figure 1).

Beginning stage

. At the beginning of the program (the first 2 sections), training aims to establish the right concept of self-awareness. Therefore, clear introduction and knowledge teaching functions as the basic foundation of the whole program. In order to gives students clear idea about what they can expect from this program and how they should do to comprehend the program, the instructor should give not only the syllabus, but also clear explanation. Concerning learning anxiety of beginners, the instructor has to remind them repeatedly in the first few sections. Moreover, in order to assure that students will be ready for future sharing and discussion, it's important to have all students follow the primary rules. The primary rules require all students maintain confidentiality and mutual-respect regarding privacy and trustworthiness. A special feature of this program is its allowing students involve program design partially in terms of section topics and process. At the first section, students will be asked for suggestion concerning certain section topics, which attracts them. Also, they got opportunity to express their ideas about how they like these topics would be done. Knowledge teaching refers to teach the definition, function and influences of self-awareness in counseling profession. The instructor should offer critical readings, including research papers and articles, to students to build up their basic knowledge. Moreover, the concept of awareness-cues and how to detect and discover these cues should be included at the beginning stage. As studies concluded, awareness-cues refer to physical senses, body reactions, feelings and emotions, and thoughts. These cues can be detected and discovered through self-induced and/or other-induced.

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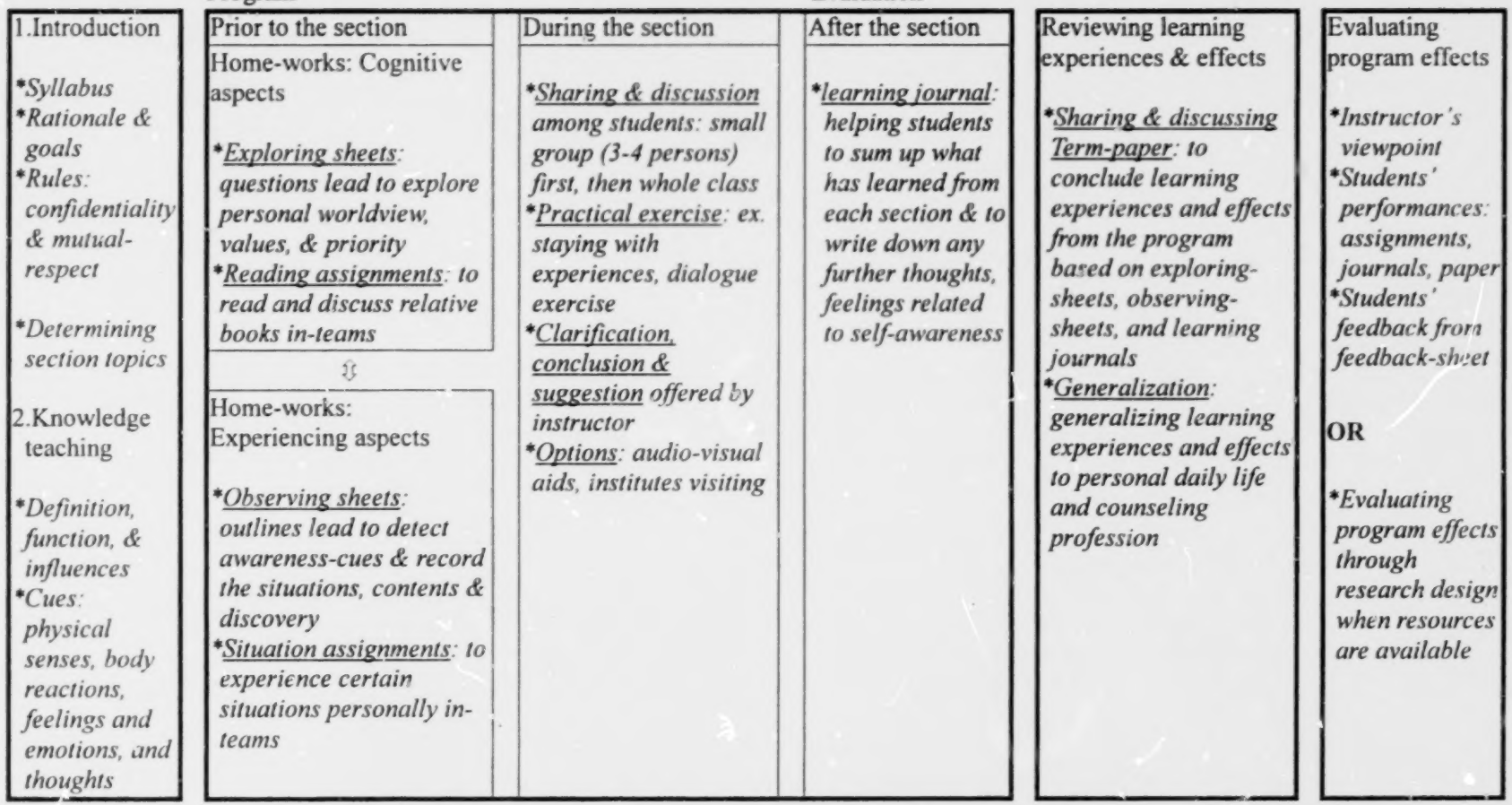
Beginning Stage
Learning-by-doing Stage
Terminating Stage
Program
(First 2 sections)
(Sections in between)
(Last 2 sections)
Evaluation
1.Introduction
*Syllabus
*Rationale & goals
*Rules: confidentiality & mutual-respect
*Determining section topics
2.Knowledge teaching
*Definition, function, & influences
*Cues: physical senses, body reactions, feelings and emotions, and thoughts
Prior to the section
Home-works: Cognitive aspects
*Exploring sheets: questions lead to explore personal worldview, values, & priority
*Reading assignments: to read and discuss relative books in-teams
Home-works: Experiencing aspects
*Observing sheets: outlines lead to detect awareness-cues & record the situations, contents & discovery
*Situation assignments: to experience certain situations personally in-teams
During the section
*Sharing & discussion among students: small group (3-4 persons) first, then whole class
*Practical exercise: ex. staying with experiences, dialogue exercise
*Clarification, conclusion & suggestion offered by instructor
*Options: audio-visual aids, institutes visiting
After the section
*learning journal: helping students to sum up what has learned from each section & to write down any further thoughts, feelings related to self-awareness
Reviewing learning experiences & effects
*Sharing & discussing Term-paper: to conclude learning experiences and effects from the program based on exploring-sheets, observing-sheets, and learning journals
*Generalization: generalizing learning experiences and effects to personal daily life and counseling profession
Evaluating program effects
*Instructor's viewpoint
*Students' performances: assignments, journals, paper
*Students' feedback from feedback-sheet
OR
*Evaluating program effects through research design when resources are available

Figure 1. The stages and strategies of self-awareness-training program

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At this point, the instructor should lead discussion in-groups to clarify and answer questions to make sure that students really understand the program rationale and the purpose of each assignment.

Learning-by-doing stage

The second stage is the leaning-by-doing stage (sections in between), which is the main body of this program. There are three parts of each section: prior to the section, during the section, and after section. Students should finish home-works prior to the section. In terms of format, home-works include exploring-sheets, reading assignments, observing-sheets, and situation assignments. Exploring-sheets are designed for exploring personal worldview, values, and priority based on the cognitive aspects. Contrarily, observing-sheets designed for detecting awareness-cues based on the experiencing aspects. Both reading assignments and situation assignments require teamwork. Students have to read and discuss relative books and to experience certain situations personally in-teams, then write personal reviews individually. Both books and situations are either appointed by the instructor or selected by team and approved by the instructor. Bringing along with home-works to the class, all students are expected to share and discuss their home-works. Meanwhile, in order to arouse sharing and discussion, small-group discussion, exercises, and other options (such as: films) are conducted vary with section topics. Before the section is over, it's important to have the instructor clarify and/or summarize what students shared and discussed during the section, and reflect it back to section topic and the self. The instructor needs to make critical comments or suggestions when it's necessary. After the section, students are required to complete learning journal to sum up what they has learned from each section and to record any further thoughts, feelings related to self-awareness.

Terminating stage

The third stage of this program is terminating stage (the last 2 sections). After learning-by-doing, students need some time to review what they have experienced and learned through the whole process in order to consolidate their gains. At this stage, the term paper functions as the core material to achieve stage goal. On the term paper, students have to conclude their learning experiences and what they gain from the program based on exploring-sheets, reading assignments, observing-sheets, situation assignments, and learning journal. And sharing these with classmates. Meanwhile, it's instructor's responsibility to help students to relate their gains to personal daily life and counseling profession at this point.

Evaluation stage

Finally, when all sections are over, the instructor has to evaluate program effects in order to improve the program and/or adjust it to certain group members. There are many ways to collect evaluation information, such as, instructor's viewpoint, students' performances and feedback that are available on regular base. Furthermore, if relative resources are available, evaluating program effects through a research design is obviously another good option.

Conclusion

In sum, the author intended to design a self-awareness-training program according to sequential studies and relative works. This program is going to be conducted on the regular

semester base and includes 16 to 18 sections in four stages: beginning, learning-by-doing, terminating, and evaluating stages. Basic concept and knowledge are grounded at the beginning. To enhance thinking and enrich experiences through vary homework assignments, including both cognitive and experiencing aspects. The program encourages students to share and discuss, as well as participating exercises for better comprehension. In order to consolidate learning effects, learning journal and term paper are used at the end of program. Finally, evaluation process is suggested to ensure program effects.

Although continuing studies and evaluation are necessary, the most important point is that counselor-educators should be more aware of the meaning and worthiness of self-awareness and willing to conduct training. To the author's knowledge, many graduate students in counseling and counseling professionals in Taiwan are now starting doing related research. Some counselor-educators are concerning seriously to do self-awareness training for counselor-students. Finally, to develop a supervision model cored by self-awareness is the author's next try.